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The relationship between loneliness and two levels of social support.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LONELINESS AND
TWO LEVELS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

by

Peggy Leah Grasse

B. A., University of New Brunswick, 1983

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at the
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1988

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Dedicated to the memory of Gordon John Traylen --

"At the bottom of the dark
I woke to hear the rustling of the curtains of the
rain and a bird singing"¹

¹Kay Smith, "At the Bottom of the Dark," in When a Girl Looks Down, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 240 (Fredericton, NB: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978), p. 46.

ABSTRACT

Current multidimensional loneliness measures appear to confuse two distinct levels of social support, here labelled the contact and confidant(e) levels. The purpose of this study was to assess the differences between nonlonely and lonely participants in terms of these two levels of support, also examining possible gender differences. Subjects were 79 males and 127 females recruited from University of Windsor undergraduate psychology classes. Each subject completed a questionnaire consisting of measures of the contact and confidant(e) levels of social support, as developed by the author, the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and a single-item measure of loneliness (Borys and Perlman, 1985). Subjects scoring below the median on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale were defined as nonlonely; those above the median were defined as lonely. With one exception, lonely subjects had significantly less support than nonlonely subjects at both the contact and confidant(e) levels of social support. Friends were more likely to provide the confidant(e) level of support than were family members, and males received less support than females did at the confidant(e) level. Females were somewhat more likely than males to provide the confidant(e) level of support. These results affirm the important role that social support, particularly friendships, plays in alleviating loneliness, and suggest that gender differences in the confidant(e) level of social support is an area worthy of further investigation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
<u>Chapter</u>	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Perspectives and Issues in the Study of Loneliness ...	2
The Contact and Confidant(e) Levels of Social Support	11
Gender Differences in Loneliness and Communication Patterns	26
Hypotheses	30
II. METHOD	34
Subjects	34
Measures	34
Contact Level of Social Support	35
Confidant(e) Level of Social Support	36
Loneliness	37
Procedure	38
III. RESULTS	40
Design and Analyses	40
Independent Variables	40
Dependent Variables	43
Preliminary Analyses	43
Analyses of Covariance	47
Covariate	48
Network Size Factors	49
Accessibility Factors	51
Close Personal Contacts	51
IV. DISCUSSION	59
Conclusions	66
REFERENCES	68
FOOTNOTES	78

Appendix

-Page

A	QUESTIONNAIRE	80
	Cover and Personal Information Sheets	81
	Contact Level of Social Support	83
	Section A, Family Network	83
	Section B, Social Network	85
	Section C, Community Network	87
	Section D, Marital/Dating Status	89
	Confidant(e) Level of Social Support, Section E	90
	Loneliness, Section F	94
	Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale	94
	Single-Item Measure	95
B	FEEDBACK SHEET	96
	VITA AUCTORIS	98

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale Scores--Descriptive Statistics by Gender	42
2 Dependent Variable Item Loadings on Factors	45
3 Mean Scores for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups on Each Factor	50
4 Marital/Dating Status Category Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender	53
5 Primary Confidant(e) Versus No Primary Confidant(e) Category Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender	56
6 Secondary Confidant(e) Versus No Secondary Confidant(e) Category Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender	57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a pervasive problem in North American society (Rubenstein, Shaver, & Peplau, 1979), due in part perhaps to cultural values emphasizing competition and individualism (Perlman & Peplau, 1986). Whatever its causes, loneliness appears to play a role in the mental health problems of many individuals (Fromm-Reichmann, 1959), including problems as serious as suicidal ideation and behaviors (Lamont, 1979; Shneidman, 1967, 1971; Wenz, 1977). Those who are lonely do not like to admit it (Fromm-Reichmann, 1959; Peplau & Perlman, 1982); human beings are social creatures, and feelings of loneliness may be perceived, by the self and others, as indicating a basic inability to relate to other people (Peplau & Caldwell, 1978). This stigma, which may even touch those who choose to research the topic, in combination with the difficulty in carrying out laboratory studies on loneliness, perhaps accounts for the fact that, until fairly recently, little empirical work had been done on loneliness (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). In the past 10 to 15 years, however, the extent of this problem has been recognized, with the result that research, and therefore also our knowledge of loneliness, is accumulating rapidly.

Perspectives and Issues in the Study of Loneliness

An analysis of the research on loneliness involves examining definitions of loneliness, the various theoretical explanations of its nature and causes, and the differing ways in which it has been measured. As expected, differences in theoretical orientation are reflected in variations in how loneliness has been defined. Most researchers seem to agree that loneliness is a subjective experience, that it is unpleasant, and that it is caused by deficiencies in a person's social relationships. However, they tend to disagree on the character of those deficiencies (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). With respect to the nature of the social deficits, some psychologists emphasize affective aspects, specifically basic human needs for intimacy, and suggest that these needs are not being met. For example, Weiss (1973) agrees with Sullivan (1953) that loneliness is "the exceedingly unpleasant and driving experience connected with inadequate discharge of the need for human intimacy, for interpersonal intimacy" (p. 290).

Others, who focus on cognitive processes, have defined loneliness as a subjective feeling of dissatisfaction due to an individual's perceiving a gap between his or her desired and achieved levels of social contact (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Sermat, 1978). Working from the same perspective, Derlega and Margulis (1982) have defined the cognitive and affective components of loneliness, respectively, as follows: the "perceived absence of an appropriate person who could assist in achieving socially

mediated goals," and "a negative emotional reaction brought on by the absence of an appropriate social partner" (p. 155).

A related approach addresses the nature of the social deficits from a cognitive behavioral viewpoint; specifically, social relationships are classed as reinforcers which influence behavior and emotions. For example, Young (1982) has suggested that loneliness is, in part:

a response to the absence of important social reinforcements even when there is no evidence of a discrepancy at the cognitive level between expectations and reality. Conversely, loneliness may persist because an individual perceives an absence of social reinforcements, even when there is no actual deprivation. (Young, 1982, pp. 381-382)

Two issues which have received attention in the theory and measurement of loneliness are, first, the question of whether loneliness should be measured objectively or subjectively, and second, the question of whether loneliness is a unidimensional or multidimensional phenomenon. With regard to the former issue, objective approaches to loneliness emphasize the measurement of variables such as size of social network and frequency of contact with others. Subjective measures are concerned with assessing satisfaction with or perceived quality of current relationships. Although lonely individuals often do have fewer social contacts than nonlonely people (Jones, 1982; Perlman, Gerson, & Spinner, 1978; Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), an examination of the literature suggests that the subjective element is probably the more important (Cutrona, 1982; Jones, 1981; Russell, Cutrona, Rose, & Yurko, 1984). Cutrona (1982) found, in a university

student sample, that subjective satisfaction with relationships was a better predictor of loneliness than were objective criteria, such as number of friends or frequency of contact with friends. Other research has indicated that lonely people have as many social contacts as nonlonelys do (Jones, 1981; Perlman & Peplau, 1986). However, for the former, the quality of contact is usually deficient (Perlman & Peplau, 1986). Jones (1981) found that lonely people tended to have more superficial contacts than nonlonely individuals, interacting more often with casual acquaintances and strangers than with closer friends and family members.

Nevertheless, the subjective and objective elements are related and the value of assessing both aspects of a person's relationships is illustrated by an examination of individual differences in human contact needs. Some people are "loners" and may be quite content with little social contact; such people are unlikely to consider themselves lonely. On the other hand, others may be married, belong to a close-knit family, and have a large circle of friends, yet still feel distressed that something seems to be missing from their relationships (Fischer & Phillips, 1982; Lopata, Heinemann, & Baum, 1982; Peplau, Bikson, Rook, & Goodchilds, 1982; Suedfeld, 1982; Young, 1982). To sum up theorists' views on this issue, the general consensus appears to be that the subjective element is the more important determinant of loneliness, but the objective element should also be considered.

With respect to loneliness as either unidimensional or multidimensional, there is less agreement among researchers. Opinions vary within and across approaches. For example, among those who take a cognitive approach to loneliness, Russell et al. (1980) fit within the unidimensional camp, whereas Sermat (1978) and his colleagues have taken a multidimensional viewpoint.

Those who claim loneliness is a unidimensional construct believe that the experience of loneliness, while varying to some extent among individuals in terms of precipitating factors and intensity, has certain common core elements. A number of loneliness scales have been developed from this global perspective, the most popular of which is the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, which includes such items as: "I feel left out," "I am unhappy being so withdrawn," "I feel isolated from others," and "I am no longer close to anyone" (Russell et al., 1980, p. 475). Theoretically, this and other global scales should be sensitive to loneliness regardless of the lonely individuals' differing ages, circumstances, and so forth (Russell, 1982).

Researchers who see loneliness as a multidimensional phenomenon, while not denying that there are some commonalities to all loneliness experiences, claim that different types of loneliness are distinctive enough to warrant measures which take these differences into account (Russell, 1982). Perhaps the most well-known relatively early proponent of this approach is Weiss (1973). Weiss (1973) suggested two types of loneliness, the loneliness of social isolation and the loneliness of emotional

isolation. The former he defined as "the absence of an engaging social network"; the latter he associated with "the absence of a close emotional attachment" (Weiss, 1973, pp. 18-19).

The loneliness of social isolation reflects the absence of the social provision Weiss (1974) labelled social integration, which is:

provided by relationships in which participants share concerns, or even better, by a network of such relationships. Membership in a network of common-concern relationships permits the development of pooled information and ideas and shared interpretation of experience. It provides, in addition, a source of companionship and opportunities for exchange of services, especially in the area of common interest. The network offers a base for social events and happenings, for social engagement and social activity. In the absence of such relationships life becomes dull, perhaps painfully so. (Weiss, 1974, p. 23)

The loneliness of emotional isolation reflects the absence of the social provision Weiss (1974) called attachment, which is:

provided by relationships from which participants gain a sense of security and place. In the presence of attachment-providing relationships individuals feel comfortable and at home. In the absence of relationships providing attachment individuals feel lonely and restless. Attachment is provided by marriage, by other cross-sex committed relationships; among some women by relationships with a close friend, a sister, or mother; among some men by relationships with "buddies." (Weiss, 1974, p.23)

Weiss (1974) postulated four other social provisions:

opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, a sense of reliable alliance, and the obtaining of guidance (pp. 23-24).

Potential sources of these provisions are; respectively, children,

colleagues, kin, and an authoritative, trustworthy figure (Weiss, 1974).¹

This multidimensional view is reflected in some of the most recently developed loneliness scales. Those which emphasize the emotional isolation/attachment deficit and the social isolation/social integration deficit components directly follow from Weiss' (1973, 1974) views and include Russell et al.'s (1984) single-item measures of emotional and social isolation and DiTommaso and Spinner's (1986) Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA). The Differential Loneliness Scale (DLS) (Schmidt & Sermat, 1983), although not based on Weiss' (1973, 1974) definitions, is also multidimensional. Schmidt and Sermat (1983) have stated that the DLS identifies specific dimensions of relationships with which loneliness may be linked, and asks subjects about the degree of their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with these specific relationships. These scales will be discussed in more detail later.

Two questions now need to be addressed: Is there evidence for a multidimensional view of loneliness? If so, which particular dimension(s) is (are) the most critical? Regarding the first question, some evidence favours a unidimensional view. Russell et al. (1984) noted that there are subjective differences between Weiss' (1973) definitions of emotional and social loneliness, yet they found that "93% of the correlations between social and emotional loneliness and the individual items [on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale] were statistically significant

($p < .01$), suggesting that the two forms of loneliness share a sizeable common core of experiences" (p. 1317). The bulk of the evidence, however, supports a multidimensional perspective. Russell et al. (1984) also found that their measure of emotional loneliness (based on Weiss, 1973) most strongly correlated with items on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale related to having no one to turn to, no longer feeling close to anyone, and not feeling well known by anyone, whereas their measure of social loneliness (also based on Weiss, 1973) was most strongly associated with items related to not feeling "in tune" with others, not feeling part of a group of friends, and not having a lot in common with others.

DiTommaso and Spinner's (1986) factor analysis of the SELSA revealed that three subscales, which the authors labelled Romantic, Family, and Social, accounted for 54% (in Study 1), and 52.4% (in Study 2), of the total variance. The Romantic and Family subscales assessed Weiss' (1973) loneliness of emotional isolation, while the Social subscale reflected his loneliness of social isolation. Austin's (1983) factor analysis of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale revealed three factors, which he labelled Intimate Others, Social Others, and Belonging and Affiliation (p. 886). Other research also provides evidence for loneliness being a multidimensional phenomenon (Hays & DiMatteo, 1987; Hojat, 1982).²

Regarding the second question--which one or more of the dimensions plays the most critical role in the experience of

loneliness--the results are less consistent. Some research suggests that social isolation/lack of social integration is the better predictor of loneliness. Cutrona (1982) reported that she and her colleagues developed the Social Provisions Scale to test Weiss' (1974) relational provisions. In their university student sample, lack of social integration, as measured by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson's (1978) UCLA Loneliness Scale, best predicted loneliness. It will be recalled ~~that~~ this provision is supplied by relationships with friends and colleagues. However, Cutrona (1982) also found that the attachment provision, usually associated with a romantic relationship, was not a good predictor of loneliness. DiTommaso and Spinner's (1986) analyses indicated that the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, although also significantly correlated with the Romantic and Family Subscales, was most strongly correlated with the Social Subscale of the SELSA.

Other research suggests that emotional isolation/lack of attachment is the better predictor of loneliness. Contrary to Cutrona's (1982) results, Russell et al. (1984) found that lack of relationships fulfilling Weiss' (1974) attachment provision (as assessed by a single item) predicted emotional loneliness. In their Dutch sample, de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders (1982) reported that their multidimensional typology of loneliness seemed to distinguish three types of emotional loneliness, rather than both emotional and social loneliness. In a review of several studies on work stress, social support, and health, House (1981)

found that relationships which provided emotional support (including empathy, trust, concern, esteem, caring, affect, and love), as opposed to instrumental, informational, and appraisal forms of support, accounted for most of the reported effects of social support.

Reference to the social support literature is justified here because social support and loneliness are related. Rook (1984) has stated that both phenomena focus on the view that social ties maintain or improve mental health. Empirical support for this connection has been provided by the work of Newcomb and Bentler (1986), who employed a hierarchical analysis of measures of loneliness and social support and found that, although distinct on lower-order factors, these two constructs, at a higher level, represented either end of a continuum. Newcomb and Bentler labelled this higher-order factor Attachment to Social Network (p. 530).

There are at least three possible explanations for the inconsistencies in the literature addressing the unidimensional - multidimensional issue. First, loneliness may be unidimensional, but evidence previously cited suggests that this possibility is unlikely. Second, it may be that some unrecognized aspect of loneliness is influencing research results. Although this may be the case, a third possibility suggests itself and seems logical, given current knowledge. It may be that the dimensions currently "in vogue" need reassessing. An examination of recent multidimensional loneliness measures suggests that these measures

may mix two distinct levels of social support by focussing on kinds of relational deficits in terms of the type of relationship (e.g. social, romantic, family). House (1981) argues that: "On logical and intuitive grounds a more adequate conception and measure of support will consider not only the structure of a person's social relationships, but also the content or quality of those relationships" (p. 30). He suggests that this goal could be achieved by asking people to identify only those relationships that they perceive as supportive, or by stating whether or not the social contacts they list (family members, friends, spouses) are actually supportive.

The Contact and Confidant(e) Levels of Social Support

The alternative conceptualization of the multidimensional view of loneliness proposed in the present paper represents an extension of the type versus quality distinction discussed by House (1981). It is contended that two levels of social support, which could be labelled contact and confidant(e), are important to avoiding loneliness. Contact involves, for example, meetings between individuals, the sharing of tasks and/or activities, communications of a practical nature, or sexual contact. A confidant(e) level of support, on the other hand, involves emotional intimacy, the open sharing of thoughts and feelings, mutual trust, and so forth. The contact level of social support includes both an objective, quantitative component (number, frequency, and availability of social contacts) and a subjective component consisting of satisfaction with available networks.

Obviously, if a person perceives the available network as unsuitable or unsatisfactory, he or she will be unlikely to be very involved in that network, no matter how extensive it is. By its nature, the confidant(e) level reflects a qualitative or subjective element because it concerns the depth of a close relationship. In assessing this level of social support in someone's life, the first question concerns whether or not the person believes he or she has a confidant(e). This question reflects both objective and subjective aspects in that it is answered in terms of: "Do I know someone who could fulfill that role for me?" (objective aspect), and: "If I know someone who could fulfill that role, do I actually see that person as my confidant(e)?" (subjective aspect). The latter question bridges the gap between the subjective and objective aspects of the confidant(e) level because it leads naturally to two other questions which are related to the first and which also need to be assessed: "Is the person I identify as a confidant(e) currently accessible to me?," and "If accessible, do I actually make use of this person when I need emotional support?"

Obviously, one may have the contact level, but not the confidant(e) level, of social support (or vice versa), one may have neither, or one may have both. As well, both levels of support may or may not be found in the same relational source. These levels of social support cut across type of relationship. For example, a spouse provides contact, but is not necessarily a confidant(e), and having a romantic partner does not guarantee

that one will not feel lonely; the same could be said about a family member, or an acquaintance (Lopata et al., 1982). An examination of these types of relationships suggests the reasons for this potential inconsistency. The contact provided by a spouse almost always involves a variety of shared experiences both in the home and outside it--running a household, leisure time with friends, community responsibilities--as well as a romantic/sexual relationship. However, not all spouses are (or are expected to be) confidant(e)s, providing their partners with emotional support.

Relationships with relatives and friends can be assessed from a similar perspective. There is usually some contact among kin, and often shared resources. However, the close emotional relationship found between confidant(e)s may or may not be present. For example, Lowenthal and Haven (1968) found that relatives, with the exception of one's own children, were rarely identified as confidant(e)s, as compared to spouses and friends, by the elderly Americans they studied. Regarding friendships, the contact most often takes the form of shared leisure activities, although it also includes pursuits with a more practical function, such as going shopping or doing mechanical repairs together, and so on. Casual friendships lack the confidant(e) aspect, whereas close friendships usually possess it to some degree. On average, the likelihood of finding a confidant(e) in a friend may be greater than finding one in a family member (Haas-Hawkins, 1978) or even in a spouse. Kin, though blood relations, are not chosen,

and spouses, once chosen, are legally bound. These ties imply that contact may be maintained when emotional ties become weak for one reason or another, whereas close friendships which lose their intimacy are easier to drop, even though the process may be gradual.

How do the contact and confidant(e) levels of support relate to loneliness? It is postulated that those who have inadequate and unsatisfactory contacts are vulnerable to the loneliness of social isolation, whereas those without a confidant(e) are vulnerable to the loneliness of emotional isolation. Although these terms parallel Weiss' (1974) provisions of social relationships, there are some subtle differences. Attachment, considered necessary to avoid emotional loneliness, is defined by Weiss (1974) in such a way as to imply the presence of the confidant(e) level of support. His definition also reflects the possibility of finding such emotional support in any one of several types of relationships (e.g. spouse, close friend); this is consistent with the above description of a confidant(e). A look at Weiss' (1974) definition of social integration, however, - reveals that although it mainly reflects the contact level of support, it also has elements reflecting the confidant(e) component. For example, "[sharing] concerns," "companionship," and "shared interpretation of experience" (Weiss, 1974, p. 23) could be found in either close (confidant(e)) friendships or in the kind of relations characteristically found between casual (contact) acquaintances.

It is argued that researchers who have developed loneliness measures based on Weiss' (1973, 1974) approach have not only confused the contact and confidant(e) levels of social support, as Weiss did to some extent, but have shifted the emphasis from the precise nature of the deficit to the type of relationship generally found to be deficient or missing from the lonely individual's life. For example, Russell et al. (1984) developed a single item measure of emotional loneliness, based on Weiss' (1973) definition. Subjects rated the following statement on a 9-point scale to indicate how intensely they were experiencing this type of loneliness:

A possible type of loneliness is the lack of an intense, relatively enduring relationship with one other person. While this relationship is often romantic, it can be any one-to-one relationship that provides feelings of affection and security. (Russell et al., 1984, p. 1315)

Although Russell et al.'s (1984) definition clarifies that other relationships besides those of a romantic nature can ward off emotional loneliness, it implies that the romantic relationship is the source most likely to do so. Weiss (1973, 1974) placed no such emphasis on romantic relationships in his definitions and discussions.

This shift in focus onto romantic relationships is not surprising, given the North American expectation that romantic relationships (including marriage) rather than other kinds of relationships, should and do fulfill all of our emotional needs. Many people believe that finding a romantic partner will relieve

their feelings of loneliness. For example, the students studied by Cutrona (1982) believed that their loneliness could only be alleviated by finding a romantic partner, yet those who overcame their loneliness did so by developing friendships. According to Rook and Peplau (1982), having a romantic attachment is expected and provides status in our society, and those who do not have such a relationship may feel unhappy and think of themselves as lonely, even if they have alternative relationships which provide them with satisfying support in other ways. Rook and Peplau have suggested that this bias may explain why few studies have explored the potentially large role friendships may play in alleviating loneliness, despite the fact that research has implied that friendships may indeed be important in this respect.

Other current multidimensional loneliness measures also tend to stress type of relational deficit and to confuse the two levels of social support. DiTommaso and Spinner (1986) developed the SELSA, which has Romantic, Family, and Social Subscales, based on Weiss' (1973) two postulated types of loneliness. An example will illustrate the potential problem here. If an individual receives an elevated score on the SELSA Romantic Subscale, which contains such items as: "I have a romantic or marital partner who gives me the support and encouragement I need," "I have an unmet need for a close romantic relationship," and "I have someone who fulfills my needs for intimacy," how does one know if that individual needs, for example, the physical contact usually found in a romantic relationship, needs emotional support in the form of a

confidant(e), or mainly needs the latter but thinks he or she needs the former? One could make a parallel argument with respect to the Social Subscale; the Family Subscale, however, appears to reflect mainly emotional closeness or, to put it another way, closeness at the confidant(e) level of social support.

The DLS (Schmidt & Sermat, 1983), developed to measure relational deficits rather than subjective feelings of loneliness, has four subscales: Family, Friends, Romantic/Sexual, and Larger Groups relationships. Like those of the SELSA, the DLS subscales share a component which seems to assess the confidant(e) level of social support, while each also has another component which seems to assess the contact level of support. A presentation of some sample items from the DLS will illustrate this lack of differentiation within the subscales. From the Family subscale, items such as "I am not very open with members of my family," and "I don't think that anyone in my family really understands me," seem to be tapping into the confidant(e) component, while items such as "I spend time talking individually with each member of my family," and "I have little contact with members of my family" (Schmidt & Sermat, 1983, pp. 1042-1043) appear to reflect the contact component. From the Friends subscale, items such as "Few of my friends understand me the way I want to be understood," and "In my relationships, I am generally able to express both positive and negative feelings" appear to assess the confidant(e) aspect, whereas items like "I usually wait for a friend to call me up and invite me out before making plans to go anywhere," "I don't have

many friends in the city where I live," and "Members of my family enjoy meeting my friends," (Schmidt & Sermat, 1983, p. 1043) seem to measure contact. Even within single items, the two dimensions are sometimes mixed:

It proved to be difficult, however, to write items for the presence-absence dimension that asked at the same time (a) whether a given relationship existed and (b) whether the person was satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things were. As a consequence, a number of these items (e.g., "I have at least one real friend" or "I have an active love life") appear to reflect the absence of aloneness as well as a degree of satisfaction with a relationship. (Schmidt & Sermat, 1983, p. 1040)

The argument here is not that current multidimensional loneliness scales are not good ones, but that we should be aware of what they are measuring. Presently, each subscale seems to be measuring two distinct components, as explained above. Therefore, each subscale of a measure shares the confidant(e) aspect with the other subscales and has another element which assesses contact in the relationship measured by the subscale. Thus, there is overlap among subscales and confusion (of level of social support) within subscales. It may not seem important to separate these two levels, because often they are found in the same relational source. In terms of measurement, however, it seems logical to separate them, in order to ascertain what the actual relational deficit is for any given lonely individual. Does he or she need a confidant(e), or some other form of contact (such as a romantic partner or someone to attend events with)? Thus, it is suggested that a more useful approach to assessing relational deficits as

factors related to loneliness would be an assessment of social support levels based on the confidant(e) and contact dimensions rather than on type of relationship (i.e. romantic, family, social, etc.).

Of the two suggested levels of social support, the confidant(e) dimension, because it is more concerned with quality than with quantity, may be more crucial in avoiding loneliness than is contact. It may be the main factor in studies which have shown that various types of relationships are important to avoiding loneliness. For example, Schmitt and Kurdek (1985), using the Differential Loneliness Scale, found that social support from family, friends, and community was important in alleviating loneliness. Sarason, Sarason, Hacker, and Basham (1985) reported, that college students who had low levels of social support, as measured by the Social Support Questionnaire, were significantly more likely to be lonely, as measured by the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, than those with high levels of social support. In a sample of 556 Dutch adults, de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders (1982) found that the married individuals in their sample were least likely to be lonely. Others have reported similar results (e.g., Schmidt & Sermat, 1983), although Peplau et al. (1982) have noted that some research suggests this pattern is more often true for married men than for married women. The results of other research suggest that it may indeed be the close emotional support provided by a confidant(e) that plays the key role. Wood (cited in Schmidt & Sermat, 1983) found that

relationships of a more personal nature were more important in avoiding loneliness than were ties with larger groups. Other research, although it has not addressed the loneliness issue, also lends support to the postulated value of having a confidant(e) or support from some significant other. Clark and Anderson (1968) in a longitudinal study, found that the best predictor of mental health in an older adult sample was the availability of a confidant(e). Brown, Bhrolcháin, and Harris (1975) and Lowenthal and Haven (1968) found that having a confidant(e) had a substantial effect on those they studied in terms of softening the impact of environmental stressors. House (1981) has suggested that who the significant other is depends on the individual situation; for example, sometimes it may be a spouse and at other times it may be a coworker (House, 1981). House (1981) also stated that research indicates that support from just one significant other can have an important buffering effect on the effects of stress on health, and that indeed one source of support is enough in many cases. In an aged sample, Haas-Hawkins (1978) found that the availability of a stable, intimate relationship was important in dealing with the stress caused by being widowed.

Although some literature shows that various types of relationships can provide the support necessary for avoiding loneliness, a fairly large body of research suggests that close friendships are more likely on average to meet this need than are other types of relationships, that is, marital/romantic or, more particularly, family relations. Yu (cited in Haas-Hawkins, 1978)

found that family support did not alleviate feelings of loneliness among a sample of bereaved individuals. Arling (1976) found that friendship/neighbour support helped to decrease lonely feelings in a group of bereaved widows more than did family support. Perlman et al. (1978) found, among seniors, that deficits in the area of friendships were more strongly linked to loneliness than were deficits in the area of parent-child relationships; contact with other relatives was not significantly associated with loneliness. Cutrona (1982) reported, in a college student sample, that satisfaction with friendships predicted UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1978) scores better than did satisfaction with either family or romantic relationships. In their research, Schmidt and Sermat (1983) found that, "of the DLS subcategories, deficiencies in the friendship area showed the highest correlations with self-reported loneliness The lowest correlations were observed between self-reported loneliness and family relationships" (p. 1043). Lopata et al. (1982), in an analysis of data collected on Chicago area widows, found that, among those aged 75 and older, the nonlonely were significantly more likely to have strong friendship supports, while the lonely were significantly more likely to have strong family supports. Lopata et al. suggested that, in the sample studied, strong friendship supports may have alleviated loneliness, while family supports may not have helped in that respect.

Two findings not directly relevant to loneliness which lend indirect support to the greater likelihood of finding a

confidant(e) in a friendship than in a family or marital relationship are those reported by Fischer and Phillips (1982) and by Lowenthal and Haven (1968). Fischer and Phillips, in a large sample of American adults, found that "isolation from nonkin [had] a substantial association with not being happy" (p. 37); this association did not hold for isolation from kin. They also found that, among those who tended to lack nonkin confidant(e)s, access to kin did not make up for this deficit. Lowenthal and Haven found, in a sample of 280 elderly Americans, that the widows/widowers with a confidant(e) experienced higher morale than those who were not widowed but who also did not have a confidant(e).

Sermat's (1978) analysis of several hundred college students' essays on loneliness revealed that 75% of the students spontaneously stated that one of the main, if not the main, factors contributing to their loneliness was the lack of a relationship in which they could share their most personal thoughts and feelings and know they would be understood and accepted. Commenting on this research, Schmidt and Sermat (1983) stated that "friends were most often the first resource an individual turned to when crises in other relationships precipitated loneliness feelings. Friendships appear to serve as an important source of support and understanding that can significantly alleviate the loneliness feelings resulting from various life crises" (p. 1046). It would seem that in a university student population, the source of support most likely

to offset loneliness would be a peer who fulfills the role of confidant(e) and with whom, in most cases anyway, the person identifies. At the age at which most people attend university, it is unlikely that casual friendships, which provide contact but can still leave an individual feeling isolated, or family relationships (with the possible exception of a sibling) from whom young people often temporarily distance themselves in their search for self-identity, could fulfill this function. In her finding that subjective satisfaction with relationships was a better predictor of loneliness than were objective criteria, Cutrona (1982) commented that social comparison was a major component of this subjective satisfaction rating. Cutrona noted that it is peers with whom individuals are most likely to compare themselves. Gottlieb (1981) has also noted the importance of peers as a means of social support, and the key role social comparison plays in this process.

Why are close friendships, in particular, more likely to be the source of the confidant(e) level of social support? It may be that, through the developmental process, we learn to turn to our peers for help and understanding more and more as we mature.

Another possibility, as previously pointed out, is that close friendships are more likely in general to allow for complete freedom of expression than are family or marital relationships, because kinship and marital ties make it relatively difficult to break off contact when emotional closeness is minimal or lacking in a relationship. The element of choice seems to be a key factor

here (La Galpa, 1981). Family members are not chosen, whereas a spouse is, so one would expect the emotional closeness important to avoiding loneliness to be more likely found within marriages than within family networks, but to be most likely found within close friendships. As has been shown, research lends support to this hypothesis. However, it may be that, if one is missing a confidant(e), having other forms of social support may lessen the distressing feelings associated with loneliness, and individuals with such supports may feel less lonely than if they had little or no support. Thus, it is important to assess other aspects of the lonely individual's social and family networks besides the confidant(e) aspect, and to include both objective and subjective components in that assessment. Nevertheless, it is proposed that having a confidant(e) is necessary to avoid loneliness completely, and that the presence or absence of a confidant(e) plays a major role in mental health.

The results of several studies suggest that there are connections between loneliness and intimacy style (Matzner, 1984; Sloan & Solano, 1984; Solano, Batten, & Parish, 1982; Williams & Solano, 1983), and between loneliness and patterns of self-disclosure (Chelune, Sultan, & Williams, 1980; Prager, 1986). Although this literature did not specifically address the availability or nonavailability of a confidant(e) in the lives of lonely individuals, it is relevant here because "intimacy," "self-disclosure," and "confidant(e)" are related. Having a confidant(e), by definition, involves self-disclosure, and,

obviously, a certain degree of intimacy is experienced between two people who confide in each other.

Studies which link capacity for intimacy with loneliness suggest that lonely individuals manifest a lower level of intimacy than do nonlonelys. Solano, Batten, and Parish (1982) found that nonlonelys perceived lower levels of intimacy in conversations with lonelys, but the lonelys were not aware of this. Williams and Solano (1983) reported that lonely college students had as many "best friends" as nonlonely ones did, but both the lonelys and the nonlonelys perceived the intimacy level in the lonely people's friendships as low, and the "friends" chosen by lonely subjects were significantly less likely to choose them in turn. Sloan and Solano (1984) found that lonely male college students exhibited a less intimate conversational style with roommates than did nonlonely ones. Matzner (1984) found that degree of loneliness in first-year medical students was negatively correlated with their capacity for intimacy.

Research linking loneliness with self-disclosure patterns has indicated that lonely individuals tend to exhibit low levels of self-disclosure and/or inappropriate patterns of self-disclosure. Chelune, Sultan, and Williams (1980) found that lonely college females manifested those very characteristics. Although she did not assess loneliness, Prager (1986) explored the relationship between self-disclosure patterns and intimacy style. Prager found that those capable of high intimacy exhibited appropriately-varied patterns of self-disclosure, while those with low intimacy status

did not. Those high in intimacy were also lower in global anxiety than were low intimates. Because anxiety seems to be positively correlated with loneliness (Hojat, 1982; Moore & Schultz, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982; Perlman et al., 1978), Prager's research probably reflects a finding similar to that already cited in which loneliness was assessed.

Thus, although these researchers looked at patterns of self-disclosure, or at intimacy style, rather than at the availability of a confidant(e) in the lives of lonely individuals, their findings suggest that lonely people are less likely to have a confidant(e) because of their apparent tendency to manifest inappropriate patterns of self-disclosure or a low-level style of intimacy. Therefore, this research indirectly lends support to the hypothesized key role played by the confidant(e) level of support in avoiding or alleviating loneliness.

Gender Differences in Loneliness and Communication Patterns

Another relevant and interesting area of research suggests that there may be gender differences with respect to loneliness (Avery, 1982; Borys & Perlman, 1985; Franzoi & Davis, 1985; Haas-Hawkins, 1978; Hansson & Jones, 1981; Jones, Freeman, & Goswick, 1981; Schmidt & Sermat, 1983; Schmitt & Kurdek, 1985; Schultz & Moore, 1986; Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). Some of these studies have indicated that males score higher on loneliness measures than females. Schmidt and Sermat (1983) found that the males in their sample received significantly higher loneliness scores than did the females. Schmitt and Kurdek (1985) reported

that college men received significantly higher loneliness scores than did both college and elderly women on all subscales of the DLS, with the exception of the Romantic/Sexual subscale. Schmitt and Kurdek suggested that "college men may have more difficulty than college women in dealing with relationships which commonly provide social-emotional support. ... college males appear to experience loneliness as an absence of meaning and closeness in relationships" (p. 494). Borys and Perlman (1985), in an analysis of previous research, found that males scored higher on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale than females did, although females were more likely to call themselves lonely. The evidence related to possible gender differences is inconsistent, however. Some studies have not found gender differences (Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Sarason et al., 1985; Williams & Solano, 1983). Russell et al. (1980) reported two studies in the development of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale; they found gender differences only in the first study. Although Russell et al. (1980) suggested these differences may have been due to a sampling problem, it was the males who scored higher on the loneliness scale; this finding is consistent with the results of some of the other studies which have found gender differences.

There may also be gender differences in patterns of communication. In our society, the effects of socialization are seen in the generally greater difficulty males experience in expressing their feelings (Borys & Perlman, 1985). Although males certainly have friends, research suggests that they do not share

very personal information to the same extent that females do, and that their offering of support is qualitatively different from that shown by females (Levin & Arluke, 1985; Sherman & Haas, 1984). It may be that some exchanges between females more closely fit the confidant(e) level of support than do functionally equivalent exchanges between males. To put it simply, females may be more likely than males to have a confidant(e). Lowenthal and Haven (1968) indicated that 69% of the elderly women in their sample had a confidant(e), compared to only 57% of the elderly men. Sarason et al. (1985) found that women, quantitatively and qualitatively, reported higher levels of social support than men, perhaps due to differences in socialization. "Others ... have emphasized that sex-role socialization discourages men from learning intimacy skills and from developing close same-sex friendships that might ease the loneliness of being widowed or unmarried" (Peplau et al., 1982, p. 339). In a group of Canadian senior citizens, Perlman et al. (1978) found, for males, but not for females, that being lonely was significantly related to a desire to receive more personal information from others.

Fischer and Phillips (1982) asked 1,050 adult Californians two questions designed to assess whether they had a confidant(e): 1. "Who do you talk with about personal matters?", and 2. "Whose opinion do you consider [in making important decisions]?" (p. 30). They defined those who lacked confidant(e)s as suffering from Weiss' (1973) emotional loneliness. Fischer and Phillips found that 30% of those surveyed replied no one in answer to both

questions and 18% named only one confidant(e). The confidant(e) tended to be a spouse, especially when the respondent was male. Twenty percent of the males said they had no one outside their household who acted as a confidant(e) for them; only 9% of the females reported the same lack. The authors concluded, on the basis of these and other analyses, that married men, although often relying on their wives to "substitute for a range of social contacts in [their] lives" (Fischer & Phillips, 1982, p. 33), did not express a desire for more social contacts as often as unmarried men did. This was not true for women, who were less likely to rely on their husbands to fulfill all of their social needs. Similarly, Lowenthal and Haven (1968) found, in an elderly sample, that women were least likely to list a husband as a confidant, while men were most likely to list a wife as a confidante. Haas-Hawkings' (1978) review of the literature on loneliness and widowhood indicated similar findings. La Gaipa (1981) has also reported that many men have only their wife as a confidante.

I wish to explore the possibility that males may feel lonelier, in general, than do females, and the possibility that males may be less likely than females to have an adequate confidant(e) level of support. If the results of my research are consistent with these suggestions, they will lend support to my hypothesis that the confidant(e) level of social support plays a major role in alleviating or avoiding loneliness.

A final consideration in the present research relates to age. Although many people believe that the elderly are most likely to be lonely, the literature suggests that this is perhaps a false assumption. Rubenstein and Shaver (1982), in newspaper surveys of samples of U.S. citizens who ranged in age from 18 to 87 years, found a significant negative correlation between age and loneliness. Schmidt and Sermat (1983) found similar results using the DLS with a non-student sample. Revenson and Johnson's (1984) survey of over 2,000 adults aged 18-89 years also showed an inverse relationship between loneliness and age. Perlman et al. (1978) found similar results in their study of a group of senior citizens. People may lower their expectations about relationships as they grow older and therefore the elderly may experience loneliness less (Peplau, Bikson, Rook, & Goodchilds, 1982). Alternatively, perhaps the elderly have learned better ways to cope with loneliness and thus it becomes less distressing to them. In any event, any research addressing the issue of loneliness should also take into account the possible effects of age.

Hypotheses

Current multidimensional loneliness measures appear to confuse two distinct levels of social support. A measure which assesses, first, relational deficits related to the objective and subjective components of the contact level of social support within family, social, community, and romantic relationships, and second, relational deficits related to the confidant(e) level of social support, may be more useful in pointing out the specific

deficit(s) experienced by any given lonely individual. The purpose of the present study is to assess the differences between lonely and nonlonely people in terms of these two levels of social support, examining possible gender differences in loneliness and in the confidant(e) level of social support and controlling for the possible effects of age.

The hypotheses are as follows:

1. The research, taken as a whole, suggests that objective characteristics of a person's social networks are not as important, as determinants in feelings of loneliness, as subjective aspects are. Thus, it is predicted that lonely people will not differ significantly from nonlonely people in terms of their objective social support at the contact level.
2. The second hypothesis follows logically from the first. It is expected that lonely people will differ from nonlonely people in terms of their subjective social support at the contact level, with lonely people experiencing significantly less subjective social support, from family, social, community, and romantic relationships, than nonlonely people.
3. Five points, abstracted from the literature, lead to the third hypothesis. These points are:
 - a) The confidant(e) level of social support involves quality, as opposed to quantity, of contact. Thus, although there are objective aspects to this level of support, it particularly involves subjective components.

- b) Personal relationships seem to be more important in avoiding loneliness than are ties with larger groups.
- c) Confidant(e)s, in general, may be more likely to be friends (and possibly spouses) than family members (or community contacts).
- d) Deficits in the area of friendships (and romantic partner to some extent) appear more often linked with loneliness than deficits in other types of relationships.
- e) Having a confidant(e) seems to reduce the effects of stress (--and most would agree that loneliness is a stressful experience).

These observations lead to the prediction that lonely people will have significantly less support at the confidant(e) level than will nonlonely people. As part of this hypothesis, I wish to test the third point noted above, namely that the confidant(e) level of social support may be found more often in friends (and possibly in spouses) than in family members.

4. As previously noted, some research suggests that males tend to be lonelier than females. Thus it is expected that the males in this study will be more likely to score higher on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale than the females, but that the females will be more likely to admit to feeling lonely, and thus will score higher than males on a single-item measure asking about how lonely they usually feel.

5. The strong possibility that males are lonelier than females, combined with the expectation that lonely people will have less support at the confidant(e) level than nonlonely people, leads to the prediction that males will have less support at the confidant(e) level than will females.

6. The effects of socialization in our culture, that is attitudes which put pressure on males to appear strong and unemotional, in combination with the research findings regarding differences between males and females in style and content of communication, lead me to expect that the confidant(e) level of social support may be provided more often by females than by males.

7. Given the results of some research (Haas-Hawkings, 1978; House, 1981) which suggests that having at least a primary confidant(e) is the most crucial factor in avoiding stress, it is expected that there will be no significant differences between nonlonely and lonely groups regarding whether subjects had only a primary, or had both a primary and a secondary, confidant(e).

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were recruited from undergraduate psychology Summer School session classes at the University of Windsor. Two hundred and nine people took part in the study. The data from 206 subjects--79 male and 127 female--were used in the analyses. Two participants were not students; their data were not used in order to keep the sample pure. One participant's data were not usable because he failed to follow instructions properly.

The male subjects ranged in age from 16 to 64 years, with a mean age of 25.19 years. The age range of the female participants was from 19 to 53 years, with a mean age of 29.12 years.

Measures

A 15-page questionnaire (Appendix A) was compiled for data collection purposes. The cover sheet of the questionnaire was entitled "Personal Relations and Social Network Survey"; it contained a brief note on the study, a note of confidentiality, instructions relating to how subjects could later receive more information about the study and its results, a note of thanks, and the researcher's signature followed by the month and year in which data collection took place. The second page of the questionnaire

contained general instructions about completing the questionnaire, and items in which each participant indicated his or her gender and age. The remainder of the questionnaire was divided into six sections, labelled A through F, each of which addressed itself to a specific area of enquiry.

Contact Level of Social Support. Sections A through D were designed to assess the contact level of social support in four areas: Family Network (Section A), Social Network (Section B), Community Network (Section C), and Marital/Dating Status (Section D). Items included in these sections assessed both objective and subjective support; they were comparable in focus to those used by Cutrona (1982), although more comprehensive than hers appeared to be. In Sections A, B, and C, subjects were asked to indicate the size of, frequency of contact with, and accessibility of members of each of their family, social, or community networks on a series of 7-point Likert scales, in order to ascertain their objective contact level of social support. Their subjective contact level of social support was determined, again using a Likert scale format, through their responses on items in which they indicated how satisfied they were with each of the objective aspects of each network and with their relationships with members of each network. The items in these sections were worded similarly, with only the introductory statements and crucial words altered.

Section D, however, contained only two items, rather than seven as in the first three sections (because most of the questions pertaining to networks were inappropriate to romantic

status). A categorical item assessed subjects' marital/dating status from an objective viewpoint. To obtain their subjective assessment of this status, subjects were asked to rate how satisfied they were within their current situation on a 7-point Likert scale.

Confidant(e) Level of Social Support. Section E of the questionnaire consisted of items designed to tap the confidant(e) level of social support. This section began with a description of a confidant(e), based in part on the work of Gottlieb (1978), Sarason et al. (1983), Schmidt and Sermat (1983), and Sermat (1978). The items which followed allowed participants to indicate whether or not they had a confidant(e), and if so, to indicate that person's relationship to them, and the confidant(e)'s gender. Following those categorical items, subjects rated how well they felt their confidant(e) fit the description of a confidant(e) provided, how accessible their confidant(e) was, and how much of the time, in general, they choose to discuss their troubles with their confidant(e) (vs. keeping problems to themselves and trying to solve them on their own). These six items related to a primary confidant(e). An additional six items, identical to the first six, were included to assess for a secondary confidant(e).

This measure of the confidant(e) level of social support was developed with the aim of finding out, not only whether the participants had at least one confidant(e) in their lives, but also the subjectively perceived quality of that relationship. Specifically, it seemed important to know how well subjects felt

their confidant(e) met the criteria of being a confidant(e), how accessible their confidant(e) was, and last but certainly not least, just how much they actually made use of their confidant(e). It is conceivable that someone may have a confidant(e) who fits the description very well and who is easily accessible, but if he or she rarely goes to that person when troubled about something, having a confidant(e) will be of little help.

Items were included to assess for a secondary confidant(e) to see whether or not there might be any advantages to having a second confidant(e) available. The results of some studies (Haas-Hawkins, 1978; House, 1981) suggest that what is most important is having that primary confidant(e) available when needed.

Although previous research had addressed some of the aspects discussed here, there appeared to be no measure which focussed on the confidant(e) level of support and which was designed to tap all of those aspects (and only those aspects) I have mentioned, particularly the one relating to the use of a confidant(e).

Loneliness. Section F of the questionnaire contained two measures of loneliness, the first being the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980), which consists of 20 items to be rated on a Likert scale between 1 and 4 (Never to Often). This scale has good reliability and validity (Perlman & Peplau, 1986; Russell, 1982; Russell et al., 1980). Although its authors developed it as a unidimensional measure, the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale has been shown to be multidimensional (Austin,

1983; Hays & DiMatteo, 1987; Hojat, 1982), a finding which, combined with its good psychometric properties and extensive use in previous and on-going research, made it an appropriate scale for use in the present study.

The second measure of loneliness was included as a result of the Borys and Perlman (1985) finding that, although males received higher scores than females on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, females were more likely to label themselves as lonely. In this single-item measure, subjects were asked to rate how lonely they usually feel on a 7-point Likert scale, from Not at all lonely to Very lonely.

Procedure

The initial step taken was to conduct a preliminary check on the questionnaire for potential problems of interpretation, and so forth. Seven subjects took part and a few revisions were made to the questionnaire as a result.

Subjects were tested in groups of 10 to 20, on average, some in their classes and others at prearranged times in a testing room. At the beginning of the session, the researcher provided each subject with a copy of the questionnaire. Some of the information on the cover sheet was reiterated verbally--subjects were told how they could later receive more information about the study and its results, and they were thanked for their participation. Following this introduction, subjects were told to read the cover sheet if they had not yet done so, to follow instructions carefully, and to ask for clarification on any items,

If necessary. Subjects then completed the questionnaire, at their own speed, and returned it to the researcher before departing.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Design and Analyses

The experimental design was a two (nonlonely vs. lonely) by two (male vs. female) factorial, with age as a covariate. Analyses included item-to-scale reliabilities, inter-item correlations, factor analyses, analyses of covariance, and chi-square analyses, and were conducted using the SPSS-X User's Guide (1986).

Independent Variables

Subjects' gender classification was determined by their responses to the gender item on the questionnaire. They were divided into nonlonely versus lonely groups on the basis of a median split on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale scores for males and females separately. The overall scores used in the median split procedure were computed by reversing negatively worded items (1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, 20) and summing all 20 items. The decision to use all 20 items in the overall scale score was based on two considerations. First, an examination of item-scale correlations revealed that only the fourth item--"I do not feel alone"--was unreliable, failing to correlate with the overall scale, $r(204) = .07$, $p = .30$. The smallest and largest correlations

with the overall scale found among the other items were, respectively, $\chi^2(204) = .45$, and $\chi^2(204) = .76$, $p < .001$. The fourth item was retained in the scale, however, because the scale demonstrated high reliability even with item 4 included. Cronbach's α for the overall scale was .91 with item 4 deleted and .90 with item 4 included ($N = 206$). Second, it seemed advisable to retain item 4 in order to allow comparison of this study with previous research in which the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was used.

In addition to determining subjects' categorization as nonlonely or lonely, a comparison of the results of the males and females on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale provided the test for the hypothesis that males would, on average, score higher than females on this scale. This hypothesis was not confirmed. As indicated in Table 4, there was only a minimal nonsignificant difference between the mean scores of the males and females. In fact, the descriptive statistics obtained in the present study were very similar to those reported by Russell et al. (1980).

A related hypothesis was that, although men would score higher than women on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, women would be more likely to acknowledge feelings of loneliness, as indicated on a single-item measure asking subjects directly how lonely they usually feel. On this item also, males and females did not differ significantly ($M = 2.69$ and $M = 2.75$, respectively), and so the finding reported by Borys and Perlman (1985) and the hypothesis advanced in the present study were not supported.

Table 1

Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale Scores--Descriptive Statistics
by Gender

Gender	n	M	Md	Mode	SD	Range ^a	
						Min.	Max.
Males	79	37.32	35.00	30.00	9.87	20	64
Females	127	37.41	36.00	30.00	8.85	22	62

^aPotential range: Minimum score = 20, maximum score = 80.

It is of interest to note that the correlation between the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale scores and the single-item measure of loneliness was higher for females than for males, $r(125) = .70$, $p < .001$, and $r(77) = .56$, $p < .001$, respectively, suggesting a tendency for the females in this sample to be more likely to admit to feelings of loneliness than the males. The difference between these two correlations was not significant, however.

One of the reasons for the inclusion of age as a covariate was the expectation, based on previous research, that older people would be less lonely than younger people. Rather surprisingly, age and the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale scores did not correlate significantly, $r(204) = -.02$, $p = .75$, in the present study. This lack of a relationship held even when the sample was broken down by gender. However, age and the single-item measure of loneliness were significantly correlated for the entire sample, $r(204) = -.17$, $p < .05$. When divided by gender, the correlation held for females, $r(125) = -.21$, $p < .05$, but not for males, $r(77) = -.13$, $p = .24$. This result suggests that the older the participant, if female, the less likely she was to indicate that she usually felt lonely.

Dependent Variables

Preliminary Analyses. It will be recalled that subjects were asked to answer a number of "objective" and "subjective" items regarding family, social, and community networks (Appendix A). Objective items included questions pertaining to network size, frequency of contact with network members, and accessibility of

network members. Subjective items included questions relating to subjects' satisfaction with perceived size, frequency, and accessibility dimensions, and general satisfaction with the relationships in that network. In order to determine whether objective and subjective items within each network category were in fact tapping discrete dimensions (and therefore could be combined to form six scales for use in subsequent analyses of covariance), a factor analysis was conducted on all of these items as well as on the other dependent variables, that is the items dealing with romantic and confidant(e) relationships.

The results of this analysis, using a Varimax rotation, are presented in Table 2. A comparison of the actual factor loadings with the a priori categories suggests a certain degree of consistency. Subjects did indeed respond differently to family, social, and community network questions. Further, within each of the network categories, subjects responded differently to some questions than to others. Although the subjects' basis for item differentiation did not parallel the researcher's a priori objective and subjective categories exactly, it still suggests a distinction between more and less subjective judgements. Thus, the first three factors--labelled Community, Social, and Family Network Accessibility, respectively, in Table 2--all include subjective and objective accessibility and frequency items and subjective "general satisfaction with relationships" items (although the Family Network Accessibility subjective relationships item and the Community Network Accessibility

Table 2

Dependent Variable Item Loadings on Factors

Variable	Factor ^a						
	1 CNA	2 SNA	3 FNA	4 CPC	5 FNS	6 CNS	7 SNS
<u>Family network</u>							
<u>Objective</u>							
Size					.67		
Frequency			.76				
Accessibility			.89				
<u>Subjective</u>							
Size					.77		
Frequency			.80				
Accessibility			.81				
Relationships			(.37)		.41		
<u>Social network</u>							
<u>Objective</u>							
Size							.78
Frequency		.70					
Accessibility		.86					
<u>Subjective</u>							
Size		(.42)					.58
Frequency		.82					
Accessibility		.87					
Relationships		.52					(.40)
<u>Community network</u>							
<u>Objective</u>							
Size						.81	
Frequency	(.55)					.64	
Accessibility	.73						
<u>Subjective</u>							
Size	.71						
Frequency	.84						
Accessibility	.86						
Relationships	.75						

(table continues)

Variable	Factor ^a						
	1 CNA	2 SNA	3 FNA	4 CPC	5 FNS	6 CNS	7 SNS
<u>Marital/dating status</u>							
Satisfaction				.54			
<u>Primary Confidant(e)</u>							
Fit				.76			
Accessibility				.65			(-.40)
Use				.81			

Note. Loadings with a value less than or equal to .35 are not reported. Values ~~in~~ parentheses were not included in the analysis of covariance for that factor.

^aFactor names are: CNA = Community Network Accessibility; SNA = Social Network Accessibility; FNA = Family Network Accessibility; CPC = Close Personal Contacts; FNS = Family Network Size; CNS = Community Network Size; SNS = Social Network Size.

objective frequency item loaded fractionally more heavily on other factors). On the other hand, size of network, perhaps the most "objective" of all the items, loaded on the last three factors--labelled Family, Community, and Social Network Size in Table 2--(except for the Community Network subjective size item).

The results for marital/dating status and confidant(e) items were even more consistent with initial expectations. The item pertaining to satisfaction with marital/dating status was expected to stand on its own or perhaps to cluster with the items involving aspects of the family network. The items relating to the confidant(e) level of social support (primary and secondary confidant(e)s) were expected to group together also. (Secondary confidant(e) items were dropped from the analysis after a preliminary factor analysis revealed that they did not load on any of the first seven factors.) Examination of Factor 4 (Close Personal Contacts) loadings indicates that the confidant(e) items all loaded on this factor with the item assessing use of a confidant(e) making the greatest contribution, followed by the item regarding how well the confidant(e) fit the description provided. Satisfaction with marital/dating status also loaded on Factor 4, although it received the smallest loading. The Factor 4 loadings are not surprising because all four items primarily reflect qualitative aspects of close relationships.

Analyses of Covariance. Analyses of covariance based on the a priori objective and subjective categories revealed significant differences between the nonlonely and lonely groups in all areas

except the community network objective category, where only a marginal difference was found. Given the outcome of the factor analysis, however, these findings had limited utility. Instead, averaging the items loading on each factor and using that data for the analyses of covariance to be reported seemed more advisable. Thus, the data from items loading on each factor were converted to standard scores (because of varying standard deviations) and subjected to two-way analyses of covariance (gender by nonlonely vs. lonely groups) with age as the covariate. Age was treated as a covariate in order to control for its possible effects on loneliness scores. A marginally significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 174) = 2.99, p < .10$, occurred on only one factor--Close Personal Contacts. Examination of the means suggests that the females in this sample had a slight tendency to have more frequent and more satisfying close personal contacts than did the males ($M = 5.78$ and $M = 5.54$, respectively). There were no significant main effects for gender and no significant gender by loneliness interactions. Therefore, a one-way analysis of covariance (nonlonely vs. lonely groups) was conducted on each of the seven factors, again with age as the covariate.

Covariate. The expectation that increasing age would result in decreasing loneliness was confirmed in the present study. A significant or marginally significant effect for age was reported on four of the seven factors: Community Network Accessibility, $F(1, 204) = 3.74, p < .10$; Close Personal Contacts, $F(1, 174) = 5.14, p < .05$; Family Network Size, $F(1, 205) = 4.85, p < .05$; Social Network

Size, $F(1,205) = 11.25$, $p < .01$. Examination of the relevant correlational data suggests that satisfaction with community network accessibility and the confidant(e) level of social support increases with age while actual family and social network size decrease with age. These results suggest that, while the quantity of social support may decrease with age, the quality of the available support increases at both contact and confidant(e) levels.

Network Size Factors. It will be recalled that the first hypothesis in the present study was that lonely people would not differ from nonlonely people with respect to their objective social support at the contact level. Although those factors dealing with network size are not exactly equivalent to the a priori definition of objective social support, they certainly deal with more objective criteria than the other factors. Examination of analyses of covariance for these three factors revealed significant differences between nonlonely and lonely subjects on two of these factors and a marginal difference on one: Family Network Size, $F(1,205) = 20.06$, $p < .001$; Community Network Size, $F(1,204) = 3.10$, $p < .10$; and Social Network Size, $F(1,205) = 37.41$, $p < .001$. The computed effect sizes (Glass & Hopkins, 1984) were, respectively, 0.60, 0.25, and 0.87. Examination of the means in Table 3 reveals that, in all three cases, nonlonely people reported larger networks than lonely people. In the present study, therefore, the hypothesis that lonely and nonlonely

Table 3

Mean^a Scores for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups on Each Factor

Factor	Nonlonely	Lonely
1 Community network accessibility	4.81 (105)	4.30 (100)
2 Social network accessibility	5.21 (105)	4.47 (101)
3 Family network accessibility	4.73 (105)	4.11 (101)
4 Close personal contacts	5.95 (100)	5.38 (75)
5 Family network size	5.24 (105)	4.60 (101)
6 Community network size	3.69 (105)	3.30 (100)
7 Social network size	4.78 (105)	3.74 (101)

Note. The numbers in parentheses indicate cell ns.

See Footnote 3 for a detailed explanation.

^aActual means, rather than standard score means, are reported.

Potential range: Little accessibility/few contacts/small size = 1;

Great accessibility/many contacts/large size = 7.

people would not differ in terms of their objective level of social support was not confirmed.

Accessibility Factors. If the Community, Social, and Family Network Accessibility factors are interpreted as approximating a measure of subjective support at the contact level, then the second hypothesis, that lonely people would receive significantly less subjective support at the contact level than would nonlonely people, was strongly supported. Lonely people differed from nonlonely people on all three accessibility factors: Community Network Accessibility, $F(1,204) = 8.43, p < .01$; Social Network Accessibility, $F(1,205) = 23.64, p < .001$; and Family Network Accessibility, $F(1,205) = 8.87, p < .01$. The computed effect sizes were 0.40, 0.66, and 0.41, respectively. Examination of the means in Table 3 indicates that lonely people reported less accessibility of members within all three networks than did nonlonely people.

Close Personal Contacts. The third hypothesis, namely that lonely people would have significantly less support at the confidant(e) level than would nonlonely people, was supported by the analysis of covariance results on Factor 4--Close Personal Contacts. As with the other six factors, the lonely group differed from the nonlonely group, $F(1,174) = 16.62, p < .001$, receiving significantly less social support. The computed effect size was 0.61, indicating that the difference in scale means between the two groups on this factor is slightly greater than the mean values suggest.

Further support for the third hypothesis came from chi-square analyses of relevant categorical items. These items related to marital/dating status, the presence or absence of primary and secondary confidant(e)s in the individual's life, the gender of the confidant(e)s, and the type of relationship existing between subjects and their confidant(e)s.

An examination of Table 4 indicates that the relative percentages of males and females in steady romantic and single/dating relationships was quite similar. However, more than twice as many females as males were married or living common law and slightly less than two-thirds as many females as males were single and not dating.

In terms of the relative percentages of nonlonely and lonely people within each category, the similarities between males and females are striking. Married/common law or single/dating statuses do not seem related to loneliness in the present sample, with about half of the males and females in these relationships classified as lonely and half classified as nonlonely. Involvement in a steady romantic relationship was obviously very good for the alleviation of loneliness, however, with more than three times as many males (22.8% vs. 7.6%), and almost three times as many females (16.5% vs. 6.3%) in the nonlonely rather than lonely category. Being single and not dating was equally unfortunate for males and females in terms of accentuating loneliness, with more than twice as many lonely as nonlonely males (20.3% vs. 10.1%) and females (12.6% vs. 5.5%). Differences between nonlonely and

Table 4

Marital/Dating Status Category Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender

Category	Nonlonely	Lonely
Males ^a		
Married/Common law	7.6	7.6
Steady romantic relationship	22.8	7.6
Single and dating	11.4	12.7
Single and not dating	10.1	20.3
Females ^b		
Married/Common law	18.9	18.1
Steady romantic relationship	16.5	6.3
Single and dating	9.4	12.6
Single and not dating	5.5	12.6

^a_n = 79. ^b_n = 127.

lonely people in the latter two relationship categories accounted for the significant overall chi-square tests: for males, $\chi^2(3, n = 79) = 8.62, p < .05$, and for females, $\chi^2(3, n = 127) = 9.94, p < .05$.

The second part of the third hypothesis, namely that the confidant(e) level of social support might be found more often in friends (and possibly in spouses) than in family members, was supported. Of the 172 subjects who indicated that they had a primary confidant(e), 46.5% indicated their confidant(e) to be a spouse or romantic partner, 43.0% indicated they were friends, 8.1% stated that they were family members, and 2.3% indicated them to be community contacts. The difference between the friends and family member confidant(e) categories was highly significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 88) = 40.23, p < .001$, as was the difference between the spouse/romantic partner and family member categories, $\chi^2(1, n = 94) = 44.94, p < .001$. Of the 144 participants who stated they had a secondary confidant(e), 54.9% indicated their confidant(e) to be a friend, 25.0% stated he/she was a family member, 18.8% indicated that the confidant(e) was a spouse or romantic partner, and 1.4% chose the community contact category. A comparison of friends and family member categories revealed a significant difference, $\chi^2(1, n = 115) = 15.34, p < .001$. The difference between the friends and spouse/romantic partner categories was also significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 106) = 24.54, p < .001$. The overall results also suggest that a primary confidant(e) is more likely to be a spouse or romantic partner than is a secondary confidant(e).

As previously noted, there were no significant gender differences in mean scores on either the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale or the single-item measure of loneliness, thus disconfirming the fourth hypothesis.

The fifth hypothesis advanced in the present study was that males would have less support at the confidant(e) level than would females. An examination of the relative percentages indicated in Tables 5 and 6 provides support for this hypothesis. Almost all (92.9%) of the women had a primary confidant(e), while only three-quarters of the men (74.3%) had one, a difference that was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 200) = 11.81, p < .001$. Similarly, 78.8% of the women had a secondary confidant(e), compared to 57.2% of the men, a difference which was also significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 204) = 9.75, p < .01$. Not surprisingly, both males and females were significantly more likely to be lonely if they had no primary confidant(e) or no secondary confidant(e) than if they had such people in their lives: primary confidant(e), for males, $\chi^2(1, n = 74) = 14.93, p < .001$, and for females, $\chi^2(1, n = 126) = 4.52, p < .05$; secondary confidant(e), for males, $\chi^2(1, n = 77) = 5.77, p < .05$, and for females, $\chi^2(1, n = 127) = 7.02, p < .01$.

The sixth hypothesis, namely that the confidant(e) level of social support might be provided more often by females than by males, was partially supported. Of those people with a primary confidant(e), 52.3% indicated that this person was male and 47.7% had a female confidante, which was not a significant difference.

Table 5

Primary Confidant(e) Versus No Primary Confidant(e) Category
Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender

Category	Nonlonely	Lonely
Males ^a		
Primary confidant(e)	48.6	25.7
No primary confidant(e)	2.7	23.0
Females ^b		
Primary confidant(e)	50.0	42.9
No primary confidant(e)	0.8	6.3

$a_n = 74.$ $b_n = 126.$

Table 6

Secondary Confidant(e) Versus No Secondary Confidant(e) Category
Percentages for Nonlonely and Lonely Groups by Gender

Category	Nonlonely	Lonely
Males ^a		
Secondary confidant(e)	36.4	20.8
No secondary confidant(e)	14.3	28.6
Females ^b		
Secondary confidant(e)	44.9	33.9
No secondary confidant(e)	5.5	15.7

$a_n = 77.$ $b_n = 127.$

However, of those who had a secondary confidant(e), the percentage whose confidante was female (65.3) was significantly greater than the percentage whose confidant was male (34.7), $\chi^2(1, n = 144) = 12.84, p < .001$.

The seventh hypothesis, that having at least one primary confidant(e) is the most important factor in reducing loneliness, was supported by the finding that there were no significant differences between the nonlonely and lonely groups, for either males or females, regarding whether subjects had only a primary confidant(e) or had both a primary and a secondary confidant(e).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The present study provided more evidence that the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale is psychometrically sound. Its convergent validity is supported by its having significantly correlated with the single-item measure of loneliness. This scale also demonstrated good item-to-scale reliabilities, with one exception. The unreliability of the fourth item found in the present research underscores the importance of doing item-to-scale reliability analyses on new measures and discarding items which do not measure up to statistical standards. Although item 4 was retained in the Scale for reasons previously discussed, the important point here is that one can only be aware of the advisability of such a decision after first completing the relevant analyses.

The verbal reports of subjects who completed the questionnaire as part of the preliminary check conducted prior to the actual study provide a possible explanation for the unreliability of the fourth item. Some participants complained that they were unsure how to respond because of the wording of the item in combination with the response alternatives. A glance at the Scale (Appendix A, Section F) shows that the problem appears to be one of a double negative.

In the present study, the hypothesis that males and females would score significantly differently on the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was not confirmed, a finding consistent with some of the previous research (Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Russell et al., 1980; Sarason et al., 1985; Williams & Solano, 1983). The expectation, based on the findings of Borys and Perlman (1985), that women would be more likely than men to admit to feelings of loneliness on a single-item measure, was also not supported. Although the higher correlation between the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale scores and the single-item measure of loneliness found for females than for males suggests a slightly greater tendency for women to admit to such feelings than men, the overall impression from the results of the present research is that males and females do not differ in how much loneliness they experience, nor in their ability to acknowledge feelings of loneliness to themselves.

Although the overall results obtained in the present study may reflect an unrepresentative sample, they may also be interpreted as an indication that loneliness is being seen as less of a social stigma than has been the case in the past.

One of the most important theoretical considerations explored in the present study was the notion that the contact level of social support should be examined in terms of both its objective and subjective meaning to the individual. In other words, it is not only necessary to consider such objective components as size and frequency of contact with members of a given network, but one

must also look at how satisfied the individual is with those objective components and with his or her general relationships with members of a network. As mentioned previously, the subjective element of satisfaction has generally been taken to be more important than the objective component. A second important consideration involves covering all potential sources of contact. Thus, in the present research, community network was included in order to assess for a potentially important source of contact beyond the obviously more "personal" family and social networks. The utility of using an approach which takes into account these two considerations was confirmed by the results of the factor analysis. In general although not in specific terms, there was a breakdown by network into what could be called subjective and objective aspects, at least as perceived by the subjects. Factors dealing with size of networks, which could be interpreted as a relatively more objective dimension, were of less importance than the accessibility factors, in terms of proportion of variance accounted for. Accessibility could be interpreted as more subjective. The results of this study suggest that an important area for future research would be a determination of the bases on which people's judgements in this area are organized. The present study has demonstrated that different dimensions do exist for subjects, and therefore researchers who fail to take this fact into consideration with respect to assessment devices used may be inadvertently presenting a distorted picture of the data.

Another important issue in the present study was whether or not the subjective social support dimension would prove to be a better discriminator of loneliness than the objective social support dimension. This position was not supported by the results of this research. Regardless of the "objectivity" or "subjectivity" of the measures employed, lonely people were deficient in all types of social support when compared to nonlonely people. It may be that the phenomenon of loneliness is so pervasive that it will be picked up regardless of whether objective or subjective measures of social support are used. On the other hand, it may be that more "finely tuned" measures could "tease out" some areas of experience in which lonely people do not differ significantly from nonlonely ones. It should be remembered, of course, that in terms of the relative importance of the various measures of social support in accounting for between-subject variability, the more subjective accessibility factors were far more important than the more objective size factors. Thus, the results of the present study suggest that a measure of social support focussing on accessibility rather than size would be as valid an indicator of loneliness as a measure focussing only on objective network size or on both dimensions.

The final major consideration of the present study was the role played by the confidant(e) in relation to the degree of loneliness experienced by the subjects. The reader is reminded that it was expected that lonely people would be found to have less support at the confidant(e) level than nonlonely people, that

confidant(e)s would be more often found among friends (and possibly spouses) than among family members, that males would have less support at the confidant(e) level than females, that the confidant(e) level of support would be provided more often by females than by males, and that there would be no significant differences between the nonlonely and lonely groups with respect to whether subjects had only a primary confidant(e) or had both a primary and a secondary confidant(e). Support for these hypotheses was mixed. Certainly, the analyses of covariance on the Close Personal Contacts factor indicated a significant difference between the nonlonely and lonely groups along the dimensions represented by that factor. However, the chi-square analyses also conducted to test the above hypotheses provided less conclusive results. The cultural expectation, as reported by Cutrona (1982) and Sermat (1978), that romantic partnerships will fulfill all of our needs for emotional intimacy was reflected in the data from the present study. Not only was it found that a greater percentage of nonlonely people fell into the steady romantic relationship category than any other, but also a higher percentage of lonely people were single and not dating than had any other type of marital/dating status. Interestingly, however, no relationship was found between being married and being nonlonely versus lonely; married individuals were as likely to be lonely as to be nonlonely. Therefore, in the present sample, although some type of romantic relationship appears to help avoid or alleviate loneliness, marriage and/or living common law do not

seem to be it! This finding lends support to the researcher's speculation that the spousal relationship does not necessarily provide the support characteristic of a confidant(e). A possible explanation for the present findings is that intimate self-disclosures may decrease after marriage for many couples, but they still stay married, whereas those who are romantically involved but not married may be more likely to part company when that type of intimacy is no longer present in the relationship.

The expectation that confidant(e)s would more often be friends than family members was borne out, for both primary and secondary confidant(e)s. This finding lends support to the suggestion that, when there is choice with respect to a relationship, as there is with friendships, there is more likely to be the trust necessary for confidences to be shared, than when there is no choice, as is the case with relatives. It is interesting to note that primary confidant(e)s were also more likely to be romantic partners than to be family members, but they were not more likely to be friends than to be romantic partners. Rather, it was the other way around, although the difference was slight. Yet, secondary confidant(e)s were far more likely to be friends, and somewhat more likely to be family members, than to be romantic partners. It would appear that when people are asked who their confidant(e) is, the first person many will think of is their romantic partner, if they have one. It seems that only when asked if they have another confidant(e) will these people then consider their friends as possible candidates for that role. This

point is especially intriguing when one recalls that the support of a confidant(e) is more important to avoiding loneliness than is romantic satisfaction--(although Factor 4, Close Personal Contacts, had satisfaction with marital/dating status as a component, the items assessing confidant(e) support received the greater weighting)--and when one also remembers that there were significant differences between the nonlonely and lonely groups on the Close Personal Contacts factor, and that marriage per se does not guarantee loneliness will be kept at bay.

As was expected, if individuals had a primary or a secondary confidant(e), they were less likely to be lonely than if they did not. However, contrary to expectations, males did not have less confidant(e) support than females, at least not at a statistically significant level. Yet, there was a trend in that direction, particularly with respect to the secondary confidant(e). This finding may simply indicate that there is some small tendency for males to have less of this type of support, perhaps because of socialization, but that this tendency is not great enough to show up statistically. On the other hand, this result could also reflect the beginning of a societal change, such that it is now permissible for males to seek (and to be) confidants rather than merely "drinking buddies."

There was strong support for the related expectation that the confidant(e) level of support would more often be provided by females than by males. It may be that, even if norms are

changing, women are still more likely to be confided in due to their long social and biological history as nurturers.

The final hypothesis in the present study, namely that there would be no significant differences between the nonlonely and lonely groups with respect to whether subjects had only a primary confidant(e) or had both a primary and a secondary confidant(e), was supported. This finding adds to the small amount of research conducted to date which suggests that what is most crucial to the avoidance or alleviation of loneliness is having at least one person with whom one can share one's concerns.

Conclusions

The present research has contributed to the literature on the topic of loneliness by focussing on an area that has heretofore received relatively little attention, and in so doing--despite the fact that the measures used probably need refining and not all of the hypotheses were supported--has also clearly pointed to some interesting avenues for further study. Researchers have begun to realize the important role played by friendships in dealing with stressful life experiences such as loneliness, yet few have addressed themselves to the special part the confidant(e) type of relationship, specifically among friends, may play. As well, it has been shown that there are important elements to consider in assessing this type of social support. In particular, the usefulness of considering not only availability of confidant(e)s, but also actual use of confidant(e)s, was made very clear by the fact that the item addressing such "use" made the greatest

contribution to the Close Personal Contacts factor, and subsequently the greatest contribution to the difference found between the nonlonely and lonely groups by the analyses of covariance on that factor.

Another striking, and surprising, finding from this research was the importance that all types of social support appear to have for the alleviation of loneliness. The author's expectation that "contact" forms of support would not be as important as confidant(e) support was not confirmed. This result serves to emphasize the key role social support does play in avoiding loneliness, and it may also reflect Newcomb and Bentler's (1986) finding that, at a higher level, loneliness and social support seem to be at either end of a continuum. House (1981) has suggested that training in giving and receiving social support would be a useful addition to our children's educational programs. If such training were offered, perhaps we would eventually see a decrease in the prevalence of loneliness in North American culture.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Although it is necessary to mention these four provisions, this paper will not address them further--rather, the concern here is with Weiss' (1974) provisions which relate to social and emotional loneliness, that is, social integration and attachment.

²Although not discussed in this paper, some of the research assessing multidimensional aspects of loneliness addresses dimensions other than emotional isolation and social isolation, for example, time factors ("chronic" vs. "situational" loneliness), and personality factors related to loneliness (e.g. low self-esteem, external locus of control). The lack of attention to these other factors here is not meant to imply that they are not important, nor that they are necessarily unrelated to the loneliness of emotional and/or social isolation.

³A few participants failed to complete items in the Community Network section of the questionnaire; their data were retained and used for the other analyses in order to keep the sample size as large as possible. A few participants, most of whom were male, answered inconsistently within the primary or secondary confidant(e) sections, and therefore their data were not used for those analyses. However, their data from other sections of the questionnaire were retained; I was especially concerned about

keeping the data from as many of the males as possible due to the difference in overall numbers of males and females. Finally, there was quite a large difference in the number of those whose data were analyzed for Factor 4, as compared to the other factors, due to the fact that (as anticipated to some degree) quite a few respondents did not have a secondary confidant(e), and some did not even have a primary confidant(e).

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL NETWORK SURVEY

In this research, I am exploring some factors which potentially link certain aspects of people's family and social networks with their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their relationships.

Please remember that your participation is voluntary, and thus, if for some reason you would rather not take part in this research after all, you are free to leave at any time without any consequences whatsoever, except that, should you do so, you cannot be given credit for your participation.

You may be assured that your responses will remain confidential. With this in mind, you are requested not to put your name on any part of this questionnaire.

When all the data have been collected, copies of a brief note containing more information about the study will be made available to your professor. An announcement will be made at that time to inform you that you may pick up one of these information sheets after class.

If you would like to talk about the purpose of this study or its results, please feel free to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Shelagh Towson, at the Psychology Department.

Thank you for your participation. Your role in this research is essential, and very much appreciated.

Peggy Grasse, B.A.
Peggy Grasse, B.A.
Graduate Student
Psychology Department
University of Windsor
July 1987

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL NETWORK SURVEY

This questionnaire consists of a number of general items relating to your family, social, and community relationships, and how you feel about them. Please take your time and consider each question carefully before deciding how you will answer. Please complete all items of the questionnaire, and do so in the order in which they are presented. It is very important that you read all introductory instructions thoroughly.

1. You are (circle one): Male Female
2. Your age in years: _____

Section A

The questions in this section refer to adults, other than your spouse, who are part of your family network, including both nuclear and extended families. The nuclear family category includes your parents and your siblings, and also your own children, if they are adults (18 years of age or older). For the purposes of this research, do not think of your spouse as part of your nuclear family, even though a spouse is normally considered to fit within that category. The extended family category refers to other relatives who fall outside the nuclear family category. In-laws, even though not blood relations, are included in the extended family category. Include only nuclear and extended family members with whom you have had at least minimal contact. Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, whichever is most true for you, in response to the questions below.

3. How would you describe the size of your family network?

Small family
network

Large family
network

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

4. How satisfied are you with the size of your family network?

Very
unsatisfied,

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

5. On average, how often do you see members of your family network?

Never or
Rarely

Daily

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

6. How satisfied are you with how often you see members of your family network?

Very
unsatisfied,

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

7. In general, how accessible are members of your family network to you? (How easy is it for you to see each other in a practical sense--distance, time, etc.?)

Not very
accessible

Easily
accessible

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

8. How satisfied are you with how accessible members of your family network are to you?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

9. How satisfied are you with your relationships with members of your family network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Section B

The questions in this section refer to adults who are part of your social network. The social network category includes people you spend time with in leisure activities and in other informal pursuits (e.g. shopping for clothing). These are the people you most often call when you have some free time to spend in a relaxing or enjoyable activity. Although you may occasionally see such people in a more formal goal-oriented type of activity (e.g. at a committee meeting), your main contact with them is of a social nature. Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, whichever is most true for you, in response to the questions below.

10. How would you describe the size of your social network?

Small social
network

Large social
network

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

11. How satisfied are you with the size of your social network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

12. On average, how often do you see the people in your social network?

Never or
Rarely

Daily

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

13. How satisfied are you with how often you see the people in your social network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

14. In general, how accessible are the people in your social network? (How easy is it for you to see each other in a practical sense--distance, time, etc.?)

Not very
accessible

Easily
accessible

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

15. How satisfied are you with how accessible the people in your social network are to you?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

16. How satisfied are you with your relationships with the people in your social network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Section C

The questions in this section refer to adults who are part of your community network. The community network category includes people with whom you have a task-oriented relationship. These are people you get together with to accomplish some goal; although you may see them occasionally on a social basis, your primary relationship with them is more formal. For example, if you occasionally see "Chris Jones" at a party, but your main contact with him/her is at a weekly local committee meeting, include him/her in this category. Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, whichever is most true for you, in response to the questions below.

17. How would you describe the size of your community network?

Small
community
network

Large
community
network

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

18. How satisfied are you with the size of your community network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

19. On average, how often do you see the people in your community network?

Never or
Rarely

Daily

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

20. How satisfied are you with how often you see the people in your community network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

21. In general, how accessible are the people in your community network? (How easy is it for you to see each other in a practical sense--distance, time, etc.?)

Not very
accessible

Easily
accessible

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

22. How satisfied are you with how accessible the people in your community network are to you?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

23. How satisfied are you with your relationships with the people in your community network?

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Section D

The questions in this section refer to your marital/romantic/sexual relationship situation.

24. Please check one of the following to indicate your current situation:

- ☐ I am married or have a common law relationship.
- ☐ I have a steady romantic relationship but I am not married or living common law.
- ☐ I am single and dating.
- ☐ I am single and not dating.

25. How satisfied are you with the quality of your relationship within this situation? (If you are single and not dating, how satisfied are you with the quality of your life in this situation?)

Very
unsatisfied

Very
satisfied

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Section E

The questions in this section refer to a special person you may feel close to, someone you might call a confidant(e). The following statements describe a confidant(e). Please read these statements carefully before going on to answer the questions.

I can freely and openly express my most personal thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears to this person, even in cases where I am angry or in cases where I would be too ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone else.

I am confident that this person understands me as I really am.

I know this person appreciates me and accepts me just as I am.

This person will listen to me with concern and interest when I need to talk about something that's troubling me.

This person always stands by me.

I can depend on this person to be there for me when I need him or her.

This person really cares about me.

This person comforts me when I need it.

This person believes in me.

This person respects me.

If I tell this person something in confidence, I can trust him or her not to tell anyone else.

I feel very close to this person.

26. Do you have anyone in your life who partially or completely fits the above description?

☐ Yes, I have such a person in my life.

☐ No, I do not have such a person in my life.

If you indicated that you have such a person in your life, but you have more than one such person in your life, please choose the one who is most central in your life and answer the following questions about that person.

27. Please check one of the following to indicate what this person's relationship is to you:

- ☐ Spouse/Romantic partner
☐ Family member
☐ Friend
☐ Community contact (e.g. minister, therapist)
☐ Other: _____
☒ No such person in my life

*If you checked "No such person in my life," do not answer questions 28 to 37, inclusive. Instead, go directly to question 38 on page 14. Answer question 38 (all items) and question 39.

28. This person is (circle one): Male Female

29. Please circle the number below which most closely indicates how well this person fits the above description of a confidant(e).

Fits only
slightly

Fits very
well

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

30. In general, how accessible is this person to you?
(How easy is it for you to see each other in a practical sense--distance, time, etc.?)

Not very
accessible

Easily
accessible

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

31. When something is troubling you, sometimes you may choose to discuss it with this person. At other times you may choose not to, telling yourself that you can handle it on your own. Thinking of your behavior in general, when you find yourself in these situations, how much of the time do you discuss what is troubling you with this person? Circle one number below, whichever is most true for you.

Never or
Rarely

Almost
always

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

32. Is there another person in your life who partially or completely fits the above description of a confidant(e)?

☐ Yes, there is such a person in my life.

☐ No, there is no such person in my life.

33. Please check one of the following to indicate what this person's relationship is to you:

☐ Spouse/Romantic partner

☐ Family member

☐ Friend

☐ Community contact (e.g. minister, therapist)

☐ Other: _____

* ☐ No such person in my life

*If you checked "No such person in my life," do not answer questions 34 to 37, inclusive. Instead, go directly to question 38 on page 14. Answer question 38 (all items) and question 39.

34. This person is (circle one): Male Female

35. Please circle the number below which most closely indicates how well this person fits the description of a confidant(e).

Fits only
slightly

Fits very
well

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

36. In general, how accessible is this person to you?
(How easy is it for you to see each other in a
practical sense--distance, time, etc.?)

Not very
accessible

Easily
accessible

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

37. When something is troubling you, sometimes you may
choose to discuss it with this person. At other times
you may choose not to, telling yourself that you can
handle it on your own. Thinking of your behavior in
general, when you find yourself in these situations,
how much of the time do you discuss what is troubling
you with this person? Circle one number below,
whichever is most true for you.

Never or
Rarely

Almost
always

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Section F

38. Please indicate how often you feel the way described in each of the following statements. Circle one number for each.

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I feel in tune with the people around me.	1	2 1	3	4
2. I lack companionship.	1	2	3	4
3. There is no one I can turn to.	1	2	3	4
4. I do not feel alone.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel part of a group of friends.	1	2	3	4
6. I have a lot in common with the people around me.	1	2	3	4
7. I am no longer close to to anyone.	1	2	3	4
8. My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me.	1	2	3	4
9. I am an outgoing person.	1	2	3	4
10. There are people I feel close to.	1	2	3	4
11. I feel left out.	1	2	3	4
12. My social relationships are superficial.	1	2	3	4
13. No one really knows me well.	1	2	3	4
14. I feel isolated from others.	1	2	3	4

(Continued)

(Question 38 continued)

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
15. I can find companionship when I want it.	1	2	3	4
16. There are people who really understand me.	1	2	3	4
17. I am unhappy being so withdrawn.	1	2	3	4
18. People are around me but not with me.	1	2	3	4
19. There are people I can talk to.	1	2	3	4
20. There are people I can turn to.	1	2	3	4

39. Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, whichever is most true for you, to indicate how lonely you usually feel.

Not at all
lonely

Very
lonely

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

APPENDIX B

FEEDBACK SHEET

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL NETWORK SURVEY

It is customary in psychological research to provide participants with more details about the study they took part in after all the data have been collected. This helps participants to benefit more from the experience, as well as increasing their understanding of the discipline. Hopefully, it also satisfies those who are curious about what specific hypotheses are being tested by the researcher.

My Master's thesis research addresses the types of social support most important to avoiding loneliness. A survey of the literature in this area led me to hypothesize that those who are satisfied with the various aspects of their family, social, and community networks, and the relationships within those networks, would be less likely to feel lonely than those who are unsatisfied. However, I do not expect to find that objective factors, such as size of a network, or frequency of contact with members of a given network, will be very important. Although these factors play a role, we all know people who are 'loners' but do not feel lonely, and there are also people who feel lonely despite the fact that they spend a lot of time in the company of others. The research to date also led me to expect that those who have confidant(e)s available to them will be less likely to feel lonely. As well, I am hoping to find out if one kind of relation (e.g. a friend) is more likely to be a confidant(e) than another kind (e.g. a family member).

A second aspect of my research relates to gender differences. The literature to date is inconclusive with respect to this, but some previous research has found that, in general, males may feel lonelier than females, but be less likely to admit to such feelings, not just because of the stigma attached to loneliness in our society, but because of differences in socialization of males and females. This socialization may, at least partially, explain why some studies have found that, in general, females seem to prefer to discuss topics of a more personal and emotional nature than males do. Because of this, I expect to find females may be cited as confidantes more often than males, and more females than males may have at least one confidant(e).

Despite the fact that loneliness is a widespread problem in Western society, very little research had been done on this topic until about 10 years ago, when social scientists began to realize the extent of the problem. I hope my research will add a little to the knowledge in this area--the more we know about it, the more we will be able to implement intervention programs specifically designed to meet the special needs of those who experience overwhelming feelings of loneliness. Everyone is lonely at certain times in his or her life, but for some it is a chronic problem.

I would like to thank you again for your participation, and invite you to contact me or Dr. Shelagh Towson at the Psychology Department if you would like further information about any aspect of this research. The results should be available early in the Fall semester, for those who are curious about the outcome.

Peggy Grasse

VITA AUCTORIS

Peggy Leah Grasse was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick on October 30, 1953. After receiving her diploma from Fredericton High School in 1971, she spent several years travelling and working. In 1979 Peggy enrolled at the University of New Brunswick, where she graduated from the Bachelor of Arts program in 1983. Peggy was employed with U.N.B. for two years prior to beginning her graduate studies at the University of Windsor in 1985. She defended her Master's thesis in October 1987.